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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000440

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST STUDENTS LOCK OUT UNIVERSITY  
ADMINISTRATORS

REF: KATHMANDU 0217

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) On March 9 members of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Student Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) padlocked administrative offices at 25 branches of Tribhuvan University. Maoist student leaders threaten that the lock-out will continue until the Government of Nepal (GON) meets their five demands, including the release of all Maoist student detainees in GON custody. University officials, fearing violent retaliation, so far have not dared to defy the lock-out. Student leaders aligned with mainstream parties have speculated that the lock-out is a ploy to disrupt campus elections that the ANNISU-R knows it cannot win. The Maoists may be using their student wing as a way to increase direct pressure on the GON without "violating" the ceasefire. End summary.

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INDEFINITE LOCK-OUT  
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[1](#)2. (U) On March 9 members of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Student Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) padlocked administrative offices at 25 branches of the government-run Tribhuvan University (TU) across the country, including in Kathmandu. (Note: There are a total of 195 TU campuses nationwide. End note.) The lock-out has not yet affected instruction, according to the Ministry of Education, and classes are proceeding as usual. ANNISU-R threatened to continue the lock-out until the University and/or the Government of Nepal (GON) fulfills five demands: a) off-cycle applications for admission for ANNISU-R members previously barred from enrolling; b) the postponement of student elections from February to April; c) medical treatment for all Maoist students injured in the insurgency; d) release of all Maoist student detainees; and e) publication of the names of Maoist students killed or detained during the insurgency.

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to Loba Tripathy, Joint Secretary for Educational Administration at the Education Ministry, TU officials had been in negotiations with ANNISU-R representatives throughout the last week of February in an effort to avert a strike. In fact, he reported, university administrators had acquiesced in granting the first two demands (which fall under TU's purview), agreeing to special applications for admission from ANNISU-R activists, who had been "underground" during the regular application season, and postponing student body elections, originally scheduled for late February, until April 23 to allow ANNISU-R candidates time to prepare their campaigns. The remaining three demands TU officials had referred to the GON. While the GON had not yet committed to fulfilling those demands, Tripathy said, it is maintaining a "positive" and "flexible" outlook. (Note: Since most Maoist fighters are believed to be under the age of 30, virtually any insurgent who had been injured, detained, or killed during the insurgency could qualify as one of the "Maoist students" cited by the ANNISU-R, making these demands especially burdensome to meet. End note.) TU officials had believed the negotiations were going well and were therefore perplexed, according to Tripathy, at the lock-out. Fearing violent retaliation, no University administrators so far have tried to break the locks and enter their offices, he said. The GON, anxious that nothing undermine the January 29 ceasefire with Maoist insurgents, is trying hard to address the crisis, he said, adding that Narayan Singh Pun, Minister for Physical Planning and GON-appointed interlocutor with the Maoists, had offered to meet with ANNISU-R representatives.

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OTHER STUDENTS' REACTIONS  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) Student leaders aligned with most mainstream

political parties do not support the lock-out. Rajendra Rai, President of the All Nepal National Free Student Union, which is affiliated with the mainstream Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML), told us that while he sympathizes with the ANNISU-R's demands, he disagrees with their disruptive tactics. Lock-outs interfere with students' education, he stated, and noted ANNISU-R's injustice in holding TU officials responsible for fulfilling demands that only the GON can meet. Gururaj Ghimire, President of the Nepali Congress-affiliated Nepal Students' Union, complained that his organization had been planning its own strike for March 13 to pressure university authorities to satisfy its own separate (seven-point) list of demands, but had been pre-empted by the ANNISU-R lock-out. He claimed this suspicious coincidence is "evidence" that the ANNISU-R, the GON, and TU officials are in collusion to prevent student body elections. Both student leaders reported that the ANNISU-R, despite lobbying to postpone elections to allow its participation, had done little serious campaigning so far and had scant popular support. They speculated that the ANNISU-R may have calculated that it could not win. Rather than face defeat, the Maoist-affiliated union staged an indefinite lock-out as a way to postpone elections indefinitely.

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COMMENT  
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15. (SBU) Meeting the ANNISU-R's blanket demands--especially its insistence that all "student" detainees be released--will be difficult for the GON, despite its desire to be "flexible." The five-week ceasefire so far has been generally well observed--a fact cited by some observers as proof of the Maoists' sincerity this time in seeking a negotiated resolution. The Maoist students' lock-out thus far has been peaceful and, since it has not yet disrupted classes, does not constitute a full-fledged strike. Thus, according to some interpretations, the lock-out does not constitute a violation of the ceasefire. Nonetheless, the action could be an attempt by the Maoist leadership, via its student surrogates, to maintain pressure on the GON by imposing on it an ever-expanding, constantly changing list of unrealistic demands.

MALINOWSKI